

Department of Defense (DoD)
Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS)
Field Advisory Services - *FAS*
Classification Appeal Decision

DoD Decision:	Production Controller, GS-1152-09
Initial classification:	Production Controller, GS-1152-09
Organization:	Army Depot Production Management Directorate Programs Control Division
Date:	September 09, 1996

REFERENCES:

- a. OPM Classifier's Handbook, Chapters 2 and 3, August 1991.
- b. OPM PCS for the Production Control Series, GS-1152, April 1992.

POSITION INFORMATION

On, the Department of Defense (DOD), Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS) received a classification appeal from three employees at Army Depot Xxxxx. They occupied a Production Controller, GS-1152-09 position. CPMS adjudicated the appeal using information provided in the appeal package and information obtained through telephone audits conducted with the appellants and with the first-level supervisor. CPMS also referenced written descriptions provided by the appellants that depict present and former production projects.

A review of the information contained in the appeal file indicated that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) downgraded the appealed position from GS-1152-10 to GS-1152-09 during an evaluation of personnel management practices in . OPM subsequently upheld the

GS-09 classification in a response to the Depot Commander who questioned the change in grade. Although the present position description (PD) does not appear to have substantially changed from the , OPM published a new Position Classification Standard (PCS) for the Production Control Series, GS-1152, in April 1992. Therefore, we will compare the duties and responsibilities described in the official PD and actually performed by the appellants with the classification criteria contained in the recently written 1992 PCS.

management rewrote and certified the official PD on to comply with a CPMS request to rewrite the appellant's PD in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. CPMS made this request after receiving the appeal because OPM wrote the 1992 GS-1152 PCS in FES format and OPM states that this format should be used for a PD when the grade of a position is determined by an FES standard (reference a). Both appellants certified that PD No. was an accurate description of their major duties and responsibilities. The Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) officially assigned the appellants to this new PD on . The appellants also indicated in the telephone audits that management established a Logistics Management Specialist, GS-346-11, position in their Division on a PD similar to their GS-09 PD. They expressed a concern that their position was not consistently classified with this new position.

Consequently, we must explain that classification law (title 5, United States Code, Section 5107) provides that each position shall be placed in its appropriate class and grade in conformance with, or consistent with, standards and guides published by OPM. Therefore, comparison to standards, not to other positions remains the exclusive method for classifying positions. This means we may not consider the classification of other positions as a basis for deciding this appeal.

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The appellants serve as project coordinators for Special Fabrication Projects (SFPs) and other assigned intensive management projects at As project coordinators, they gather data to determine project feasibility and to estimate the project cost. They initiate and coordinate the development of a statement of work (SOW) which defines the responsibilities of all functions to be involved in the project. Once and the customer agree on the project, the coordinators act as liaison between and the customer and continuously monitor the production progress of the project. In fact, the project coordinators act as the local control points for their assigned projects coordinating with activities such as engineering, procurement, production, supply, quality assurance, and the production controllers in other branches to ensure project completion within designated time and monetary frames. In order to accomplish these functions, the project coordinators must use a comprehensive knowledge of depot production management facilities and processes along with technical skill in the development

and fabrication of specialized vans and shelters containing a variety of complex electronics and communications equipment.

The Production Control Series, GS-1152, covers this type work because it includes work involved in planning, estimating, scheduling, and expediting labor, machines, and materials in specific manufacturing or remanufacturing operations that employ mechanical and automated production methods in the fabrication, rebuilding, overhaul, refurbishing, or repair of Government-owned or operated equipment, systems, and facilities. The servicing CPO assigned the position occupied by the appellants to this series and we concur with that determination. The appellants did not contest their series allocation.

The GS-1152 position classification standard (PCS) designates the title "Production Controller" for positions that meet the coverage criteria for the series. Agencies may use parenthetical titles that describe a substantial depth of knowledge in a particular production area (e.g., Aircraft). Due to the wide variety of special fabrication and other production projects assigned to the appellants, the servicing CPO has not designated a parenthetical suffix to the initial title, "Production Controller." We concur with that determination.

GRADE-LEVEL DETERMINATION

The GS-1152 PCS uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors. Under the FES format, we place positions in grades on the basis of the duties and responsibilities assigned, and the qualifications required as evaluated in terms of the nine factors. We then assign a point value to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description in the standard, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level. To arrive at the final grade-level for a position, we convert the total points assigned to a grade by use of the grade-conversion table in the applicable standard.

In order to arrive at the final grade level for this appealed position, we must apply the nine FES factors to the duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellants. The application and evaluation of the nine FES factors appear below.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position:

This factor measures the nature and extent of the knowledge needed to accomplish the assigned work and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required and applied. The appealed position requires a comprehensive knowledge of depot maintenance facilities and production processes including a knowledge of the types of productions skills available in the depot shops. The SFPs managed by the appealed positions range from the fabrication of small, highly mobile, deployable shelters containing communications security and data processing equipment to the fabrication of upgrade modification kits containing a variety of electronics and communications upgrades for the and Helicopters. Therefore, the position also requires technical knowledge and skill in the methods and processes required for the development and fabrication of specialized vans, shelters, and kits containing a variety of complex electronics and communications equipment.

By comparison with the criteria contained in the GS-1152 PCS for Factor I, these knowledge requirements match Level 1-6. At this level, employees use knowledge and experience in the manufacture, overhaul, or repair of products or projects using multiple process production methods and procedures to control the production of complex products. The products or projects identified with this level involve numerous skilled trades utilizing a variety of general purpose and specialized machines, tools, equipment, and materials to manufacture, remanufacture, or overhaul systems such as missile launcher systems or major systems of fixed and rotary wing aircraft (e.g., communications and electronic upgrade kits for the Helicopters).

The level of skill and knowledge described above for the appealed position clearly exceeds Level 1-5 where employees use a knowledge of established production methods and procedures, labor, and material requirements in order to provide assistance to higher graded production controllers or to control projects that involve repetitive and uncomplicated production control tasks such as the production of conventional electronic surface and airborne communications systems, or mobile field ordnance. However, the level of skill and knowledge required to accomplish the assigned duties of the appealed position does not meet Level 1-7. At this level, in addition to the knowledge and skills required at Level 1-6, the production controller must possess a comprehensive and intensive practical knowledge of all the production methods, procedures, machines, and materials, along with considerable skill and experience to plan the controls for the manufacture, overhaul, or repair of very complex products (e.g., spacecraft, combat or strategic fixed wing aircraft, or very large and complex weapon systems like a warship or submarine). Although the appealed position does require a comprehensive and intensive practical knowledge of production methods and procedures in order to coordinate the production of assigned SFPs, it does not require the intensive production knowledge and skills required to coordinate the production of complex weapons system projects described at Level 1-7.

On the basis of this rationale, we assign Level 1-6 for Factor 1 which equates to 950 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls:

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility for completing the work, and the review of completed work.

The official PD of record reflects that the supervisor assigns work in broad parameters, either in written or oral format. The assignments normally encompass the priority, the unique aspects of the project, and any procedural changes applicable to depot operations. The appellants who occupy this appealed position then independently develop the milestone schedule, monitor the use of resources, resolve problems within their scope of authority, and clarify project status. They also independently maintain project control through development, preproduction, and limited production phases of the SFP coordinating with all production areas and consulting with the supervisor only concerning problem areas outside their scope of responsibility. The official PD also indicates that the supervisor performs a cursory review of the work for effectiveness in meeting objectives. The telephone audits we conducted with the two appellants and the first-level supervisor verified the accuracy of the supervisory responsibility reflected above and in the official PD.

The level of supervisory control described for the appealed position and verified as accurate involves a high degree of independence and responsibility which exceeds Level 2-3. At this level, the supervisor normally assigns responsibility for providing control of production in one specific department or large shop and defines the general objectives and priorities of the project within that area. The supervisor also makes any changes to project deadlines and remains available to assist the employee with unusual situations which do not have guidelines or clear precedents. The controller at Level 2-3 analyzes the production requirements; plans for the various phases of production; coordinates the job scheduling, materials, and funding; and handles problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies, or accepted practices. The supervisor at Level 2-3 evaluates completed work for technical soundness, efficient use of resources, resolution of normal production problems, and efforts made to expedite project deadlines.

In contrast, the level of supervisory control described for the appealed position best equates with Level 2-4, the highest level described in the GS-1152 PCS. Similar to the appealed position, this level describes a situation where the controller receives minimal guidance and exercises independent responsibility for analyzing, planning, and carrying out complex production control tasks and for resolving most of the production, labor, machine, and material problems which arise. Also, similar to the appealed position, this level reflects a

work situation where the controller plans and coordinates the timing and integrated production efforts of various departments and shops involved in a production project, informing the supervisor of any situations that could impact on long-term production requirements. At this level, as in the appealed position, the controller consults with the supervisor to provide information, report potentially troublesome situations, or recommend corrective actions in areas beyond the controller's authority. Also, similar to the appealed position, the supervisor at Level 2-4 reviews completed work only in terms of effectiveness in meeting and coordinating production requirements and deadlines (e.g., project objectives).

On the basis of this rationale, we assign Level 2-4 for Factor II which equates to 450 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines:

This factor covers the nature of guidelines used, and the judgment needed to apply them.

The official PD of record indicates that available guidelines for the appealed position include customer requirements such as statements of work, depot and maintenance policies, and depot and Department of Army procedures on production, control, and accounting. However, because each project presents a different challenge, the project coordinator must use extensive judgment in interpreting the guidelines and in selecting the best methods and techniques to monitor and control the resources applied to each project and to document the project status.

The nature of the guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them that we found in the official PD for this appealed position fully meet all aspects of Level 3-3. At this level, controllers use available guidance for most assignments but these guidelines do not always specifically apply to some products, processes, or production operations. Controllers at Level 3-3 therefore use considerable judgment to interpret, adapt, or extend the policies, guides, procedures, and precedents to a variety of new or different products and production operations. However, as verified in audits with the appellants and their supervisor, specific policies, procedures, and precedents do not always exist for the prototype SFPs assigned to the appealed position. These SFPs require extensive experience and judgment in devising the best methods and procedures to monitor and control. Consequently, the judgment needed to apply guidelines for these projects exceeds Level 3-3.

At level 3-4, the GS-1152 PCS describes a significant lack of definitive or directly applicable guidelines for most projects along with a lack of standard production data from the production shops or personnel sources. At this level, the highest level described in the PCS, the controller must exercise a significant degree of initiative in searching out sources of information, much of it indirect or obscure, to develop project estimates and plans for the

control of complex production products. In addition, at this level, the controller may depart from traditional criteria, methods, and procedures to develop new ones which may also require proposing new policies to obtain effective results, overcome unusual problems, and meet individual customer requirements. Although the nature of guidelines used and the judgment needed to apply them exceeds Level 3-3, the telephone audits conducted and the project examples provided by the appellants did not depict a significant lack of existing policies, precedents, or production data for most SFPs nor the need to consistently develop and implement new policies and procedures characteristic of Level 3-4.

On the basis of this rationale, we find that the nature of the guidelines and especially the judgment needed to apply them exceed Level 3-3. However, they do not meet all aspects of Level 3-4. Therefore, in accordance with the OPM guidance contained in reference a, we must assign the point value for the next lower factor level, Level 3-3, which equates to 275 points.

Factor 4, Complexity:

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The project coordinators assigned to the appealed position coordinate the production of a variety of SFPs and other assigned projects for . The projects controlled involve the fabrication of special kits, vans, and shelters containing a variety of complex electronic communication systems. The controllers initiate and monitor the fabrication of the shelters and the installation of the electronic equipment. Most of the assigned SFPs represent long-term, depot-level, initiatives and some include prototype designs and equipment. The actual coordination involves pre-depot commitment contacts with project managers and depot engineers to determine project feasibility, to provide cost estimates, and to project a completion time for the project. After the work begins, the coordinators monitor production progress and dollar expenditures using statistical data from various production tracking systems. They expedite the work by investigating delays and recommending ways to resolve production problems. Action recommended by the coordinators to resolve any production problem depends on the nature and priority of the project, the customer requirements, the reason for any delays, and funding levels.

We find that this level of complexity best compares with Level 4-3. At this level, the controller deals with the advance planning or immediate production control for the manufacture, construction, overhaul, or repair of a variety of types of products, or one or more complex products that have numerous components or subassemblies. The product at

this level may also represent a new type of equipment or system, made up of different complex components that require a large portion of the facility's general purpose production machinery. Production controllers at this level, as well as the coordinators assigned to the appealed position, normally program the work on a long-term basis (many months) and they can readily access production control data.

Although a number of the SFPs controlled by the appealed position involve prototype designs and equipment and represent long-term, depot-level efforts, they fall significantly short of meeting the overall complexity of the projects described at Level 4-4. At this level, assignments involve prototype or developmental equipment, or equipment systems composed of a large number of different components and subassemblies, or products that represent long-term, depot-level, major overhaul or repair. Examples include responsibility for a major segment, system, or compartmented zone of a spacecraft, a complex combat or strategic aircraft, or comparable products (e.g. the propulsion system of a large ship or nuclear submarine). Controllers at this level typically face difficult problems due to the lack of standard data and guidelines for the equipment or project. In addition, the complexity and individual nature of each product or project and its special requirements prevent the use of established production plans, methods, and procedures.

On the basis of this rationale, we assign level 4-3 and credit 150 points.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect:

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, as measured by the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The appealed position serves as the focal point and coordinator for high visibility SFPs and other production projects. The appellants who occupy this position initiate and monitor a variety of these projects insuring that depot commitments on a SFP can be met within allocated funds and within desired time frames. They inform depot management of major production problems requiring action beyond their scope and recommend the course of action for resolution. The results of their work impact the ability of DOD customers to field complex electronic communication systems in a timely manner thus impacting their operational readiness. Their work also enables to competitively compete for future workload from DOD customers.

The level of Scope of the work identified in the appealed position clearly meets Level 5-3. At this level, the controllers use established or precedent criteria and production plans to resolve a variety of conventional production problems and situations. However, this level of scope

does not meet Level 5-4 where controllers plan, develop, and implement entire production control programs of considerable breadth and complexity, and also establish the operational criteria for their programs as well as the measurement criteria to assess program effectiveness.

We also find that the Effect of the work clearly meets the criteria described at Level 5-3 because, as described in the PCS at that level, it does impact the effectiveness of the operations at the depot enabling it to competitively compete for future workload. However, as described above, the effect of the work goes beyond the activity and impacts the operational readiness of 's customers. Therefore, the effect of the completed work exceeds Level 5-3 and compares favorably with Level 5-4 where the work does have a direct impact on the safety and security of the personnel in the organization to which the product must be shipped.

On the basis of this rationale, we find that the Scope of the work meets Level 5-3. However, the Effect of the work meets and exceeds Level 5-3 and in some aspects meets Level 5-4. Consequently, we must follow the OPM guidance contained in reference a and assign Level 5-3, the point value for the next lower factor level at which the position fully meets all criteria for that level. Factor Level 5-3 equates to 150 points.

Factor 6, Personal Contacts and Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts:

Factor 6 includes face-to-face contacts, telephone contacts, and other dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Factor 7 includes the reason or purpose for these contacts. The personal contacts that serve as the basis for the level selected for Factor 7 must be the same as the contacts selected for Factor 6.

Persons Contacted:

The appealed position maintains regular contact with project managers and other depot customers, commercial contractors, maintenance management personnel, project engineers, supply and procurement personnel, production supervisors, controller and inspection personnel, final product users, and co-workers in the division.

This level of contacts best compares with Level 2 where controllers deal with employees in the same agency, but beyond the immediate organization who generally work in different functions and missions (e.g., agency project managers, maintenance managers, final product users). Although the position maintains regular contact with employees within the immediate organization and related support units (e.g., production foremen, engineers, supply personnel, and procurement personnel), these contacts do not represent the highest level of personal

contacts regularly maintained. The position also deals with commercial contractors from outside the agency. However, these contacts do not represent the regular, nonroutine, unstructured personal contact situations described at Level 3 in the GS-1152 PCS. Consequently, we assign Level 2 for this factor.

Purpose of Contacts:

The appealed position makes the personal contacts described under Level 2 above to coordinate the use of resources, to clarify requirements, to investigate problems, to obtain or inform on project status, or to make recommendations.

The purpose of these contacts exceeds Level *a* where controllers contact other personnel only to obtain, clarify, or give facts, status, or routine technical information concerning their project. Instead, the purpose of these contacts best compares with Level *b* where controllers contact other employees for the purpose of planning, coordinating, advising of production status, or resolving production problems by influencing or motivating production and support personnel. Although fully meeting Level *b*, the purpose of the contacts described above does not fully meet Level *c*. At this level, controllers regularly use personal contacts to influence, motivate, and persuade shop and department supervisory or management personnel to follow a different course of action. These contacts normally arise due to unexpected problems such as material delays or changes in productions methods, procedures, or priorities. At this level, the controller must also constantly overcome the objections of skeptical or uncooperative personnel to achieve a solution. Therefore, on the basis of this rationale, we assign Level *b*.

The combination of Levels 2 and *b* equates to 75 points using the table provided on page 24 of the GS-1152 PCS. Therefore, we assign 75 points for Factors 6 and 7.

Factor 8, Physical Demands:

This factor measures the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee in performing work assignments, including the agility and dexterity required and the extent of physical exertion.

Level 8-1 describes sedentary work. The employee may sit comfortably to do the work, but there may be some walking, standing, bending, and carrying of light items. According to the official PD, the appealed position requires regular walking through production areas, climbing of steps and occasional travel assignments. This level of physical demand clearly meets Level 8-1. However, it does not meet Level 8-2. At this level the controller must stand, walk, and climb in industrial facilities where they also find it necessary to bend, crouch, stoop, reach, and lift moderately heavy items to accomplish their work. We found no evidence that this

level of Physical Demand exists for the appealed position.

On the basis of this rationale, we assign Level 8-1 and credit 5 points.

Factor 9, Work Environment:

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings and the safety precautions required.

At Level 9-1, the work environment involves everyday risks and discomforts which require normal safety precautions typical of such places as offices, meeting and training rooms, and libraries. At Level 9-1, the work environment also includes adequate lighting, heating, and ventilation. Although the appellants assigned to the appealed position normally work in the offices and conference rooms associated with Level 9-1, they also regularly pass through production and shop areas to accomplish their work. However, we find no evidence that this work regularly involves the risks and discomforts associated with working in a production area which also normally requires additional safety precautions. Consequently, the work environment typical of the appealed position does not meet Level 9-2. Instead, it best compares with Level 9-1.

On the basis of this rationale, we assign Level 9-1 and credit 5 points.

SUMMARY OF FACTORS

Factor Level Points

1. Knowledge Required by the Position 1-6, 950
2. Supervisory Controls 2-4, 450
3. Guidelines 3-3, 275
4. Complexity 4-3, 150
5. Scope and Effect, 5-3 150
6. Personal Contacts and
7. Purpose of Contacts 2-b, 75

8. Physical Demands 8-1, 5

9. Work Environment 9-1, 5

TOTAL 2060

Final Grade Determination:

Using the Grade Conversion Table found on page 12 of the GS-1152 PCS, we find that the total points assigned for this position, 2060, fall within the GS-09 point range of 1855-2100.

CONCLUSION

This position is properly classified as Production Controller, GS-1152-09.